Syllabus subtopic: Achievements of Indians in science & technology; indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

Prelims and Mains focus: about the deployment and its significance for India’s presence in IOR; about the geopolitical importance of IOR

News: Adding teeth to India’s air and maritime dominance in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), a squadron of fourth-generation fighter jets Sukhoi-30 MKI equipped with the BrahMos missile was inducted on Monday at the airforce station in Thanjavur in the Southern Air Command.

Sukhoi-BrahMos Combo

With a combat radius of nearly 1500-km without requiring a refuel, Sukhoi 30 jets have been modified to carry BrahMos air-to-surface missiles with a range of nearly 300 km, giving them the capacity to conduct long-range precision strikes.

About the squadron

- The squadron is a resurrection of the Tigersharks 222 squadron, which was raised at Ambala in 1969 with Sukhoi Su-7 aircraft. In July 1971, the squadron was moved to Halwara and was engaged in combat with Pakistan Air Force in the 1971 war.

- The squadron was formally inducted by Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat.

- The resurrection of the 222 Squadron highlights the integration and jointness that is the future for our armed forces and integration of this weapon system would not have been possible but for the support of the Indian Air Force, the HAL, the DRDO and BrahMos.

Advantage for India’s presence in IOR

- Sukhoi-30 MKI equipped with BrahMos will indeed become a game-changer for our armed forces.
• Not only will it extensively enhance the security of our maritime domain, but the squadron can also perform tasks in support of the land forces, protecting the vulnerable areas and points and any other tasks that may be assigned to them.

Importance of IOR

• The region comprises the ocean itself and the countries that border it. These include Australia, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Madagascar, Somalia, Tanzania, South Africa, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

• There is an obvious sense in which the region is the future. The average age of people in the region’s countries is under 30, compared to 38 in the US and 46 in Japan. The countries bordering the Indian Ocean are home to 2.5 billion people, which is one-third of the world’s population.

• Some 80% of the world’s maritime oil trade flows through three narrow passages of water, known as choke points, in the Indian Ocean. This includes the Strait of Hormuz – located between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman – which provides the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean.

• The economies of many Indian Ocean countries are expanding rapidly as investors seek new opportunities. Bangladesh, India, Malaysia and Tanzania witnessed economic growth in excess of 5% in 2017 – well above the global average of 3.2%.

• India is the fastest growing major economy in the world. With a population expected to become the world’s largest in the coming decades, it is also the one with the most potential.

• Politically, the Indian Ocean is becoming a pivotal zone of strategic competition. China is investing hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure projects across the region as part of its One Belt One Road initiative.

• In security terms, piracy, unregulated migration, and the continued presence
of extremist groups in Somalia, Bangladesh and parts of Indonesia pose significant threats to Indian ocean countries.